

WE ARE WINCHESTER

OCT 2025

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KATIE JORDAN

Winchester Book Gallery Recommends:



In 1972, when workers in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, were digging the foundations for a new development, the last thing they expected to find was a skeleton at the bottom of a well. Who the skeleton was and how it got there were two of the long-held secrets kept by the residents of Chicken Hill, the dilapidated neighborhood where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by

side and shared ambitions and sorrows. Chicken Hill was where Moshe and Chona Ludlow lived when Moshe integrated his theater and where Chona ran the Heaven & Earth Grocery Store. When the state came looking for a deaf boy to institutionalize him, it was Chona and Nate Timblin, the Black janitor at Moshe's theater and the unofficial leader of the Black community on Chicken Hill, who worked together to keep the boy safe.

WinchesterBookGallery.com | 3 N. Loudoun St

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

October always brings a little magic—cool mornings, busy weekends, and the quiet shift from summer's buzz to fall's golden rhythm. This month, we're spotlighting the makers, mentors, and business owners making our corner of the world feel like home.

You'll meet Sarah Wacaster of Panhandle Apothecary, who's carrying on a family tradition of plant-based healing and creating a space where people can learn. Tina Stevens-Culbreath of the I'm Just Me Movement and Tavan Mair of Connected Communities Inc. share how their programs are transforming lives. Tour the new Patsy Cline Memorial Park, and watch another movie that reeled in locals and celebrities alike.

It's not always the big gestures that change a town. Sometimes it's a cup of tea, a walk through a farmer's market, or a story shared at just the right time. We're grateful to keep sharing those stories with you.

We'll see you in Old Town!



*Misty Weaver
& Katie Jordan*

**WE ARE
WINCHESTER**

PATSY CLINE MEMORIAL PARK

The new Patsy Cline Memorial Park officially opened to honor the city's most beloved musical icon. The park offers a welcoming space that blends history, music, and community gathering. It features two levels—one along Kent Street and another along East Pall Mall Street. Visitors can enjoy landscaped seating areas, informational displays chronicling pivotal moments in Cline's career, and two performance spaces designed for outdoor concerts and events.

The park is the vision of financier Timothy Mellon, who grew up nearby and has long admired Patsy Cline's music. Inspired more than a decade ago after visiting her grave and feeling she deserved a more fitting tribute, Mellon proposed the park to city leaders in 2014. He financed the project entirely himself, with the agreement that it would be gifted to the city of Winchester and maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Now open to the public, Patsy Cline Memorial Park serves as both a community greenspace and a lasting tribute to a woman whose music continues to inspire generations.

Visit the park at 616 S Kent St, as well as the Patsy Cline Historic House located at 608 S Kent St.



PANHANDLE APOTHECARY: HEALING HERBS

When you walk into Panhandle Apothecary on a quiet afternoon, the first thing you notice is how *calm* it feels. Yes, there are shelves of teas, apothecary jars full of herbs, and the unmistakable scent of lavender and something floral you can't quite name—but the real draw here is the feeling that you can take a breath. Maybe even ask a question you've been too nervous to ask anywhere else. That's the space Sarah Wacaster and her family have created, with roots that go back to her mother-in-law Lorraine Wacaster, who started the business back in 2018 with little more than a need, a kitchen, and a head full of research.

"Lorraine was allergic to narcotics," Sarah explains, "and after back surgery, she had no real options for pain relief. So she started experimenting with CBD—reading everything she could, trying things out on herself. And it worked. So she gave it to our friends and family. That worked too. It grew from there." Before that, Lorraine worked with cold light laser therapy in equine rehab, helping horses recover from injuries. "It was transferable to the human world," Sarah says, "but horses can't tell you where it hurts. So she had to learn how to *listen differently*—and that shaped how we do things here."

In the early days, Sarah helped make CBD candies at home. "I think we made hundreds in a batch—it was sticky chaos," she laughs. "Hard candy making is no joke." Eventually, they partnered with a manufacturer in Colorado to handle production and testing, while keeping Lorraine's original formulas. The family's in-house brand, Panhandle Cannabis Company, includes broad-spectrum and full-spectrum products derived from hemp and formulated with integrity.

In addition to their cannabinoid products, Panhandle Apothecary has a full herbal apothecary with over 200 medicinal herbs. Visitors can blend their own teas, get advice on what herbs help with sleep, stress, digestion—you name it—or just sit down with a cup and enjoy a quiet moment.

Each tea blend on the wall has its own purpose. "One of our most popular is *Child's Pose*, which has holy basil—an adaptogen that helps your body manage stress," Sarah says. "My 14-year-old son hates tea, but it's the only one he'll drink. That says a lot."

And yes—some herbs can be smoked, too. "It's not something most people know, but herbs like chamomile, spearmint, and lavender can be incredibly effective when smoked. It's the fastest way to get the benefits into your bloodstream," Sarah explains. "You can even add herbs to pipe tobacco to change the flavor and feel."

They regularly host workshops too—everything from tea blending to broom-making classes with local artisans. "It's about reconnecting with things we've forgotten—how to use what's around us to care for ourselves."



Sarah is quick to say they aren't medical professionals. "There's no such thing as a certified herbalist in the U.S., despite what people claim. We're not here to replace your doctor. We're here to help you ask better questions, understand what you're putting in your body, and feel empowered."

That means being picky. All herbs are sourced from a certified organic farm in Colorado. Every product they sell has a certificate of analysis—and no product hits the shelf until someone in Sarah's family has personally tested it. "If it gives someone a headache, tastes terrible, or doesn't do what it says, we won't sell it. Simple as that."

They also stock books—some for sale, and some so rare that they keep them for community use only. "We want people to be able to do their own research. We'll help guide, but I want folks to leave here trusting *themselves*."

"People don't know what they don't know," Sarah says. "A lot of CBD is imported from overseas, and in other countries, hemp is used to clean up toxic soil—it pulls heavy metals and pesticides right out of the ground. And then it ends up in your gummies." Her advice? Only buy CBD sourced from U.S.-grown hemp. "It's more regulated. It's safer. If your CBD product doesn't list the origin or lab results, walk away."

Panhandle Apothecary's Winchester location opened in September 2022, but the family also has a location in Berkeley Springs, and they're thinking about what comes next. "My husband takes care of our daughter so I can be here. We're building something that I believe in with my whole heart. People walk through that door every day not knowing what they need—and we help them figure it out. Sometimes it's tea. Sometimes it's pain relief. Sometimes it's just being heard." And that? That's medicine, too.

Visit them at 15 S Loudoun St, PanhandleApothecary.com

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES INC.



When Tavan Mair first opened the doors of Connected Communities in 2017, it was little more than a vision at his kitchen table. Alongside his colleague and friend Crystal DeWalt, he began by offering mentoring and assessments for local children in need. Today, Connected Communities has grown into a thriving nonprofit with 50 employees, serving families across the Shenandoah Valley.

The growth has been rapid, but the mission has remained the same: to provide creative, individualized support for children and families facing some of life's toughest challenges. "We never wanted to be a cookie-cutter organization," Mair explained. "We try to meet people where they are and respond to what the community actually needs."

Mair's passion for this work is deeply personal. He spent part of his childhood in foster care and was later adopted by relatives. His own struggles at home and in school gave him a unique perspective on the needs of young people. "I lived it—it's been my life," he said. "God definitely called me to do this, and I wanted to take those experiences and turn them into something positive for kids who are going through the same things."

The organization's work reaches into schools, homes, and community spaces, offering outpatient counseling, mentoring, and a wide range of programs tailored to individual needs. Licensed therapists, qualified mental health professionals, and mentors work together to support children of all ages, often in collaboration with schools and families.

One of the nonprofit's most impactful programs focuses on

diversion—helping keep young people out of detention centers and hospitals, or supporting them as they transition back home. "We're very creative," Mair said. "It's hard to pinpoint just one thing we do, because if there's a need in the community, we try to find a way to help."

What sets Connected Communities apart is its emphasis on practical life skills and community ties. Children in the program may find themselves learning to cook, practicing job interview skills, or building social skills through partnerships with local businesses. "We want to give them experiences they may never have had—and connections that last even after our services end."

Looking ahead, Mair hopes to one day create a safe haven for children caught in "the in-between"—those in foster care, transitioning out of residential facilities, or facing sudden family loss. "When I was in that place, there wasn't really anywhere to go," he said. "I'd love to provide a temporary home that feels safe, meets basic needs, and helps reconnect kids to resources."

The organization also sees an urgent need for more support for youth aging out of services at 18. Many lack resources or direction at a critical stage of life. Expanding job training and connections in the trades—welding, electrical, plumbing, and mechanics—could offer pathways to stability. "We're called Connected Communities for a reason," Mair said. "Our dream is to connect kids not just to services, but to real opportunities for their future."

Mair says what they need most is awareness, community connections, and people willing to share their skills with kids. "Money is great, but teaching a skill or giving an experience means even more," he said.

Connected Communities has proven that with care, creativity, and determination, it's possible to transform not just individual futures—but an entire community.

Learn more at CCIWinchester.com



October events

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PLANTS TO DIE FOR: MSV WALK

Kick off spooky season with a guided stroll through the Glen Burnie Gardens and discover the dark histories of seemingly innocent plants. [MSV](#)

9

SAVOR THE WORLD

Wander through the Godfrey Sperry Miller historic home, where each space unveils a unique wine and gourmet food pairing. [Godfrey Miller Center](#)

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DINO-CON

Roar into prehistoric fun at Dino-Con—a day-long celebration of dinosaurs and the Scraposaurs exhibition! Fun for dino lovers of all ages. [MSV](#)



A Day of Family Fun – FREE Admission!

WHEN: Saturday, October 18th

TIME: 10:00AM - 4:00PM

WHERE: Winchester Regional Airport

Marvel at spectacular aircraft exhibits, explore a dynamic lineup of classic and custom cars, and dive into hands-on fun in the interactive Touch-a-Truck zone. Whether you're an aviation enthusiast, a car lover, or simply seeking a family-friendly adventure, there's something for everyone!

Event Highlights

- Aircraft Static Display & Car Show
- Food Trucks & Sweet Treat Vendors
- Craft & Small Business Vendor Market
- Touch-a-Truck Experience
- Live Music, Entertainment and Family Fun

Visit regionalchamber.biz for more information!

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TEA & TAI CHI

Join us at Handley Library for Tea & Tai Chi, a refreshing blend of mindfulness, movement, and yes...really good tea. [Handley Library](#)

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HARVEST FEST

West Oaks Fall Harvest Festival features hayrides, corn maze, pumpkin patch, apple picking, live music, food vendors, activities, kids attractions, and more! [West Oaks](#)

MISS VALENTINE

Winchester took center stage this year with the romantic comedy *Miss Valentine*, directed and produced by filmmaker Blayne Weaver. After a sold-out hometown premiere, the film is set to reach audiences nationwide when it begins streaming October 1 on Xumo, Comcast and Spectrum's free streaming platform.

Weaver is no stranger to Winchester. His relationship with the area began with *Santa Girl* (2019), the first in a series of films made in partnership with Shenandoah University and Capital Arts Entertainment. Students have worked alongside industry professionals on each project, gaining real-world credits and experience. Since then, Weaver has directed multiple films in the region, including a horror feature and the Hulu holiday hit *Cupid for Christmas*.

With *Miss Valentine*, Weaver drew inspiration directly from the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival. "I thought it would be a great backdrop for a romantic comedy," he explained. "You can't recreate a parade or fireworks show on our budget. But by filming during Apple Blossom, we were able to capture million-dollar production value for free."

The production leaned heavily into Winchester's charm. Viewers will spot the Old Town Winchester sign, local police vehicles, and familiar festival scenes woven throughout the movie. "I learned years ago that if you set a story in a real place, lean into it," Weaver said. "Don't pretend it's somewhere else. Winchester has such a distinctive look—it deserved to be seen."



The film also benefited from Apple Blossom's celebrity connections. When Weaver learned that *The Office* star Kate Flannery was serving as the festival's Grand Marshal, he quickly wrote a role for her as a witty event announcer. Flannery then helped recruit actor Pete Gardner (*Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*), while Apple Blossom connections also drew in Mary Lou Henner and rising star Ali Astin. The film's leads include Paris Berelc (*Alexa & Katie*), Karen Abercrombie (*War Room*), and Enrico Colantoni (*Veronica Mars*).

One of Weaver's favorite memories from filming came during the parade sequence. "We built a float for Paris Berelc's character. She wasn't sure about riding through town, but as soon as the parade began, people started shouting her name—not her character's, but Paris. She got really emotional about it. It was a beautiful moment, and so much of that energy ended up in the film."

Beyond showcasing Winchester onscreen, Weaver stresses the value of the Shenandoah University partnership. Students served as crew members and even operated cameras for festival scenes. "What I'm most proud of is that students graduate with real credits on IMDb," he said. "They walk away with something tangible that helps launch their careers."

Miss Valentine is currently wrapping up a theatrical run, with screenings in Los Angeles, New York, and Winchester selling out quickly. More showings are planned in cities like Nashville and Shreveport ahead of Valentine's Day. But beginning October 1, audiences everywhere will be able to watch from home.

"It's been such a joy to make movies here," Weaver said. "Winchester has opened its doors to us, and I think audiences will really see the heart of the community in *Miss Valentine*."

I'M JUST ME MOVEMENT: BUILDING COMMUNITY

On any given day, if you ask someone involved in the *I'm Just Me Movement* what they do, you won't get a polished elevator pitch or a corporate-style mission statement. You'll get stories—about hotel rooms filled with laughter from kids facing being unhoused back from summer camp, about teens journaling through trauma with the help of mentors, or about board members who show up with heart, not just credentials.

IJMM empowers youth and families—especially those impacted by trauma or adversity—through mentoring, support programs, and community connections that build resilience, self-acceptance, and lasting change. This summer, a \$3,000 grant from United Way sparked something bigger than anyone expected from a grant that was smaller than years past. Instead of holding their traditional summer camp in one centralized location and hoping kids could get there, IJMM brought the camp to the kids—literally.

"We reached out to Kids Club and said, 'We have a grant. We want to bring enrichment and STEM activities directly to the kids who might not otherwise have access,'" says founder and Executive Director Tina Stevens-Culbreath. "No transportation needed. Just showing up where they already are." The program was a mash-up of science, soft skills, and connection—delivered with purpose with the help of Dr. Diane Jackson-Schnoor.

Imagine a group of kids holding hands in a human circuit to learn about conductivity and then talking about what it means to be part of a community. A solar pizza oven activity that doubled as lunch and a STEM lesson. Daily journals become tools for reflection and confidence-building. It's holistic enrichment—intellectual, emotional, and social, and most importantly? It's working.

At the heart of IJMM's programming is the belief that mentorship can literally change the trajectory of a life. "It costs \$217,000 to incarcerate a youth," Tina notes. "But a mentor? That's an entirely different investment—with ripple effects." Those effects include higher graduation rates, fewer fights, and more options. IJMM's programming covers everything from a trauma-informed community summit at Laurel Ridge Community College to school-based support through Project Courage, peer support training, STEM enrichment, and mental wellness workshops—there's no one-size-fits-all because the needs aren't one-size-fits-all.

Like many nonprofits, *I'm Just Me Movement* is weathering a storm. State-level budget cuts have hit hard, grants have been smaller or removed altogether, and IJMM isn't pretending otherwise. But what makes their team remarkable is how they're choosing to respond—with transparency and resilience. "We've lost funding. Programs will look different," the team shares openly. "But we are pivoting to continue to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children."

There's now a goal to ensure the non-profit can continue to serve the community: 35 recurring donors at just \$25 a month. IJMM is gearing up to raise funds on Giving Tuesday to not only continue their programs, but collect the smaller items that make a real impact like laundry detergent and quarters, as well as work force clothing. A reminder to all of us that it's difficult to concentrate on growing as a community member when your basic needs are not met.

Each event isn't just an activity—it's an entry point. An opportunity for someone new to learn, connect, and maybe even say, "I want to be a part of this." And the message is clear: resilience isn't about doing more with less. It's about doing what matters with what you have—and inviting others to help build the bridge.

Become a donor at ImJustMeMovement.org



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